



**Name:** Steph Astro

**Current Job:** SEPnet Employer Engagement Officer, School of Physical Sciences

**Field of research:** Industry Engagement in Physics.

**University:** Kent

**Country:** UK

**Letters:** L

### **What does your job involve?**

Most of my job involves working with industries to see how I can help them; either by linking them with someone in academia or supporting their recruitment targets. Much of this is ensuring companies have visibility within our physics department and that employers have an opportunity to share their skills with students.

### **How did I get into this job?**

I spent nearly 15 years as a science teacher, so traversing to higher education (with a quick segue to the IOP) wasn't too much of a stretch.

### **Has being LGBTQ affected my career decisions?**

I wasn't accepted as Bi. Many thought I just hadn't made up my mind and when I finally found a relationship with someone (who happened to be male) I was obviously not part of the gay community and in the end lost contact with people of whom I had built friendships.

At work, it wasn't something that could be talked about, for risk of losing a job. A male gay colleague had to keep his partner a secret as he had lost a job before.

I would tell those in similar situations that there is strength in numbers, not least because you always have someone to talk to but also, a group of people have a voice. There are still prejudiced people hidden in the tiniest of pockets wherever you work. They may be less outspoken about their views, but in some ways that makes it harder to tackle. A community voice can help to give perspective on the actions of others and create guidelines for response to the stress and anxiety of either trying to 'fit in' or professionally manage the subtlety of some people's ignorance.

### **Have you ever had any reactions to being LGBTQ?**

I was 17 when I finally came to terms with being a bi-female. There was no fanfare or huge debate, rather it was more a pat on the head from parents with "Well, we all experiment when we are young." And a physical recoil from a dear friend – who 6 months later said "You were joking, weren't you?"

### **Did you have any role models?**

It wasn't until I moved to London after completion of A levels that I met with others from the LGB community.



My earliest memories were of Eddie Izzard and Ellen De Generes, both of whom were incredibly brave for their time period. They were themselves, proudly and unapologetically.